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THE RE-ORGANISATION OF THE  
TRANSVAAL INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS.  
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The lack of interest of the youth in the Youth Congress and the necessity to re-organise the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress has motivated the presentation of this paper.

We hope that this paper is taken in the light and spirit in which it is presented and that the discussion of this paper be based on the concrete work that we have to do in order to make the Youth Congress a mighty organisation.

### THE INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS IN THE PAST.

The past history of the Youth Congress has been one of many ups and downs. In the past we have managed to arouse the Indian youth to a height of political activity, but this has been short lived. We notice this in the activities of the Indian youth during the Passive Resistance struggle of the Indian people, during 1946 - 48. We found no difficulty in obtaining the full support of the Indian youth in the May Day and June 26th strikes. The youth were in the forefront of the Indian people in the historic Defiance campaign. On many other issues the Youth Congress has obtained full confidence of the Indian youth.

Yet, with such political consciousness and interest in the struggle of the Indian people, with such support for the noble cause of freedom; we have not been able to build the Indian youth into a mass organisation of politically conscious young people. In other words, with all the moral support that we enjoy, we have not been able to build the Youth Congress. It is the intention of this paper to try and rectify our past faults and to turn over a new leaf in the organisation of the Indian youth.

### DIVISION OF INDIAN YOUTH.

When dealing with a subject of this nature, it is necessary to divide the youth concerned into various groups who have similar interests. The Indian youth can best be divided into three main groups:

1. The school-going youth and the University students.
2. The workers in the shops and factories.
3. The young people in the country towns.

The first group can further be divided up into three groups, the age limit being the most important factor.

- a. The younger group between the ages of 15 and 18.
- b. The older pupils at the schools.
- c. The university students.

The workers in the shops and factories must be divided into their two respective groups.

In our future organisational work we must endeavour by every means to cater for the social, political and other needs and interests of these groups in their right perspective.

### HOW THE YOUTH CONGRESS ORGANISED IN THE PAST.

One of the most noted forms of organisation of the Youth Congress in the past has been for formation of branches in the various areas. Members living in the area were informed that there would be a meeting of the Branch in that



particular area. Some people would come, not because there is any interest in the Youth Congress but because they feel that the activity was interesting. In some cases a committee would be elected. But in every case these branches would function for only a few weeks and then die down until another attempt to organise a branch; and then another repetition.

A large proportion of the young people that we have in our ranks have come through our political activity, in particular a school strike or a political campaign of the national organisations.

Attempts have also been made to run educational classes through which it is hoped to get young people to take an interest in the affairs of the Youth Congress and the struggle of the oppressed people.

Another form of organisational tactic lately being used is the organisation of tours to various parts of the country.

#### BRANCHES AND THEIR FAULTS.

Branches is a good system for keeping young people together provided we have young people of the same interests. One of the basic reasons for the failure of the branches in the past has been not the lack of work done by the officials of the Youth Congress but the clash of interests. Youth of the various groups mentioned above are asked to come to the same meeting, where we aim to provide activities which would be of interest to all. As a result, the scope of activities is very small; after a while there is a stagnation and the branch dies.

Branches can be successful if we try to form branches of young people and aim at getting people of the same interests to come along and provide activities accordingly. For example, we must endeavour to form a branch in Fordsburg of the young pupils of the school, and immediately. Other forms of activities can be provided for the working youth and the other groups.

#### TOURS.

Organised tours can become a great boon to the organisation of the Indian Youth, but these must be followed up by activities for the various groups taking in the tours. For example, from our recent tour, we notice that many young people come daily to the offices of the youth Congress, - all they can do is to sit around and chat. We must be able to provide some sort of activity for these people. An activity like a table tennis board in the offices has proved the great need for more of such activities.

#### CLASSES.

The typing and shorthand classes that have been running for the past months can provide a good recruiting ground for the Youth Congress but it seems that they have become mere charitable organisations. Very much more work requires to be done amongst the people attending these classes. It should be left to the organisers of these classes whether to make a direct approach or not.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION OF THE YOUTH CONGRESS.

We suggest that the Indian Youth Congress should be completely re-organised on the following lines; always bearing in mind the above mentioned organisational principles.

#### THE CELL SYSTEM.

Since we have managed to get a core of young people from our recent tour to Natal we must immediately form ourselves into the "CELL SYSTEM". Starting from the executive of the Youth Congress, each member where ever possible must get a group of young people around him. He must be responsible for the politising of these young people. He must endeavour to make them active in the Youth Congress and to take up responsibilities. He must organise activities for these people and he must get them to attend political classes. They must become true fighters for freedom and peace within a set time limit. After this period the units which are ripe should split up. We must get more people to work amongst. In this way, we will be able to five fold our active membership within a period of say, three months.



This system will be most effective if carried out with sincerity and within set groups.

The advantages of this group would be the closer knitting of our membership, the effective implementation of the subscription system, a very close contact with the members of the Youth Congress and it will provide the movement with more young people to do practical political work.

After a time, these CELLS can come together and form themselves into branches. The new people will have developed a sense of responsibility towards the Youth Congress and will be able to work out their own programmes.

EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL AND OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Since we are beginning the new school year it will be a good idea to call a mass meeting of young people with many interesting items to attract these people. From this we can organise a branch of the lower age group in the school.

The older age group must be worked amongst and these people must be brought into the CELL SYSTEM.

University students must be encouraged to form a branch of the Youth Congress at the University and must take an active part in the S.R.C. and S.L.A. and must be encouraged to play their full part in the fight against segregation at the University.

THE WORKERS IN THE FACTORIES AND THE SHOPS.

The only contact which we have with the Indian Youth is through the N.U.D.W. We must see that every endeavour is made to build the Union even if it means that we have to get some people from the Youth Congress to specialise in the work of the Union. We must make use of the membership of the Union to spread our ideals and our propaganda, we must make them active members of the Youth Congress. We must encourage the members of the Youth Congress to join the Union. A good Union man is a good fighter for freedom.

The workers in the factories have very little contact with us but we must work amongst them and bring them into the cell system. We must provide activities for these young people.

THE YOUTH IN THE COUNTRY TOWNS.

Although there is some contact with the youth in the country towns, it is not sufficient, and we must get groups of young people going into the dorpies to inspire the youth with the ideas of the Youth Congress. We must encourage these people to form branches to provide youthful activities. We must insist and encourage them to follow the forms of organisation outlined in this paper.

SOME WEAKNESSES OF THE YOUTH CONGRESS.

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One of the predominant factors in the organisation of the Youth Congress has been police intimidation. Parents are afraid to send their children to the Youth Congress meetings. It is for this purpose absolutely necessary that we camouflage our activities. Where necessary, we must organise branches and activities under different names and titles.

Another great fault has been petty quibbles at Executive meetings which has prevented serious consideration on organisational matters.

The major fault has been the lack of activities of the Y.C. Executive decisions to call general meetings from time to time have not been carried out. In fact for the last six months, not a single general meeting has been called. The Youth Congress should go into the matter of organising activities for young people. e.g. monthly activities. These need not necessarily be political, but activities such as debates, mock trials etc. can have a great effect on the young man. The "CELLS" must become active in providing activities for the necessary people. Executive members to be responsible on these sections and report.

We trust this report is taken in a good spirit.



(1) Educational facilities  
Organizers of every class  
development story water etc.

(2) Social + recreational  
piano  
camps  
weekly

(3)



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AFRICAN LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA,

BY. M. B. YENOWA.

In this short lecture I will attempt in broad outline to discuss African labour in South Africa, tracing its history in relation to the economic and political history of this country. At the outset, let us examine what we mean by labour. To me labour is a physical or mental exertion for a useful end or purpose sold at a certain price. We may use it to cover the working class generally. We have to differentiate therefore, between forced and free labour like slavery and prison labour, which although it might be physical or mental exertion is not sold for a price.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Before the advent of the Europeans in this country Africans were living in what we may call an Agricultural and pastoral economy. In this type of economy the fine distinctions between the labouring and capitalist classes does not appear. The man produced all his wants to a large extent, and the few wants that he cannot satisfy by his own products are bartered by those produced by his neighbours. In a society like that there is no sale of labour to another man for a price. Labour has not become specialised.

We find then the emergence of labour problems in this country with the coming of the Europeans with their money-form of economy. When the Dutch Colonists came to the Cape they found a race of Africans which they called "Bushmen". It is interesting to note that the Europeans consistently claim that when they came to this country, they did not meet any Africans, yet their own history records that they did meet Africans, the so-called Bushmen, and the fact that they had to hunt and kill them does not mean that they were animals, they were humans, Natives of Afrika. When the Dutch Colonists tried to "domesticate" the Bushmen and make them do their work in the farms and in their households they failed because Bushmen could not leave easily their life of freedom and hunting game. The Dutch colonists also found scattered groups of Hottentots, another African race, and these they also tried to use as a source of labour, but they found that they could not be induced to work regularly, and the colonists eventually had to resort to the importation of slaves from the Dutch Settlements of the East.

The fact that South Africa was once a slave country is not usually stressed far enough when we discuss the pattern of racial attitudes in South Africa. There can be no doubt in my mind that the slave-master-attitude of the former Dutch colonists still persists in the behaviour of their descendants towards the non-White races. These slaves were used for the most part in the homesteads and vineyards of the farmers and all the menial labour was done by them, and thus the European of this country developed an attitude of despising manual work as "slave or kaffir work".

As Dutch Colonists moved further inland they came into contact with yet another African race, the Bantu, who were more virile and better organised than their brothers- Bushmen and Hottentots. In the meantime the advance of the European further inland had driven the Hottentots away from their lands and rendered them homeless, wandering and destitute, and they were being collected by sympathetic Missionaries into Hottentot "Reserves". Even at this early time the Colonists were already complaining that the keeping of the Hottentots in these reserves was depriving them of potential labour, because if they were homeless and destitute they would have to come and seek work. The Frontier farmer, however, did not need many workers, he was essentially a pastoral farmer, and the little Agriculture that he had to do was only for his personal needs as he could not market his produce because of transport difficulties to the nearest markets. It was the farming community near Cape Town which relied on agriculture for its livelihood which had to suffer most when slavery was abolished in 1834. The abolition of slavery had a marked effect, therefore on the overall supply of labour to the Cape Colonists.



Official policy of the Dutch East India Company and of the subsequent British Administration was that of preventing as far as possible contact between the Europeans and the African tribes further inland. Throughout the history of the African-European Wars you hear of the creation of "No-man's land" designed to effect this policy. Yet as far as the farmers were concerned they wanted both the land and the Africans as well as their labour and it is small wonder that the wars were inevitable. Throughout these so-called Kaffir Wars the land of the Africans was gradually but surely taken up under all forms of pretext. These had an effect of rendering many Africans homeless and combined with the Nongqauze incident forced large numbers of Africans to go back into the newly-acquired white farms to seek employment and land for settlement. The white farmers however, wanted only a certain limited supply of labour and could not afford to have more than that number which they needed, and moreover it was inevitable that the hungry tribesmen finding no employment and no land, would have to resort to taking away whatever cattle they found on the whiteman's farms, much more so when they knew and saw that some of those cattle were in fact taken away from them as war indemnity. And this led to the introduction of the Pass System in 1853. The Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria, in his circular to all Magistrates writes as follows:

"I am not desirous that any Native be permitted to enter the colony, except on special application by the Colonists, or when, from urgent circumstances, it may appear to you desirable to grant applications made direct from Natives; and I am of opinion that the plea of visiting friends or even relatives, ought never to be entertained, as in most cases such applications are merely made with the view of obtaining presents from industrious people who have saved property in the colony or possibly for political intrigue."

Whilst there was a natural desire on the part of the European farmer that "Natives" should be kept in their own reserves, economic forces were at hand compelling the farmers to seek for African labour to work on the Cotton and sugar fields in Natal. Here you find official policy of the then governments being directed at trying to solve the question of supply of African labour by specific ingenious devices. The Commission of 1852 to 1854 of Natal appointed to inquire into the ways of increasing the supply of African labour came to the conclusion that African locations should not be made large but should be broken up and be scattered throughout the country near the farms of colonists as a convenient source of labour. They also recommended that the Annual Hut Tax be increased and that Africans on European farms should be exempted from taxation, and to encourage "civilisation", Africans living in houses of European "construction" and who had only one wife be exempt from taxation. A witness giving evidence in that Commission of 1852 to 1854 had also mentioned the possibility of using Indian indentured labour to increase the supply of labour in the sugar fields of Natal. It was Sir George Grey who, having seen the results of the use of indentured labour in the fields of Mauritius, when he visited Natal in 1855, approved of a scheme put forward by some colonists that Natal should try and obtain Indian indentured labourers. Thus in 1860 the first Indian indentured labourers came to Natal to work on the sugar fields.

The discovery of Diamond Mines in Kimberly had important and far-reaching effects on the economy of South Africa. Hitherto, South Africa had been solely a farming community and developments of towns had been determined by the location of farming areas and nearness to ports. With the development of mining in the interior of South Africa there emerged important consuming centres in virtual deserts. This created a ready market for Farmers' produce, and also accelerated the extension of Railways from the ports towards Kimberly. This also created a great demand for African labour in these projects. Prospectors for diamonds flocked from all parts of South Africa to find their fortunes in the diamond diggings, farmers, traders, and professional men. Most of the diggers came to the mines with their own labourers from their farms, as the diggings went on, however, it became more and more difficult to obtain African labourers. Recruiters went out to African Reserves



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engaging men to work on the diamond diggings. They were even collecting them on the roads going towards the mines, and selling them to the diamond diggers. Wages on the diamond diggings were at first 10/- per month, but they were not to remain there for long. They rose up, until they came to 30/- per month as demand for labour increased. Wages obtained in the diamond diggings were much higher than those obtaining in the farms, and therefore more Africans were attracted to the diggings. Another very strong attraction was the prospect of buying a gun by the young tribesmen, as guns were freely sold to Africans in Kimberly. Chief Langalibalele's men must have bought their guns from here. Wage rates of European workmen were fixed at wage rates that were even higher than those paid to Africans overseas. In order to attract artisans from overseas the mines had to pay a premium for risk and insecurity borne by an artisan who left his job overseas under settled conditions for a young speculative industry here. As a result there was a great disparity in wage rates of African unskilled workers and European skilled workers. As a result of complaints by diamond diggers that Africans were stealing diamonds and that they were usually drunk and as a result lost their efficiency a compound system of housing Africans - a system that has become a feature of African industrial housing - was adopted. The Kimberly compounds were fenced in.

The discovery of gold mines in the Transvaal towards the close of the last century, produced similar but more spectacular results than those in the diamond diggings. Skilled engineers and miners were needed and to attract them wages of £23 and over were offered. African wages were much lower being only 15/- per week. Yet considering this wage of the African labourer, one cannot help but be struck that since the discovery of the Gold mines African wages up to this day have not risen, and indeed as we shall find later the wages on the mines have had to fall far below this figure as a result of the monopoly position of the Chamber of Mines as far as purchase of African labour is concerned. Since the money wages of the European artisan had to be of necessity high, it was of vital importance that African labour should be obtained at as low price as possible. The capitalist in the production of any article has to decide on how to lower his costs in such a way that he may get the maximum profits these costs could be in many units, being power, labour machinery depreciation etc. In my view then the gold mines decided on how much they had to spend on the labour unit of cost, and then when they have determined this they used as much as possible of this amount earmarked for labour in attracting the unwilling artisan from overseas, and then the remainder had to be spent on Africans no matter how little of it was left. The mine Companies then found themselves a good excuse for paying the African this low wage in comparison with his white co-worker. They argued that the African had only limited wants to satisfy with the money he got, and as soon he had money enough to satisfy those wants his inducement to continue to work was exhausted, and therefore the raising of his wages would have the effect of decreasing the supply of labour to the mine. Other mines of course knew that the argument could not hold water in practice, and as if to prove that the other theorists are wrong increased the wages of their workmen. In its first Report in 1889, the Chamber of Mines was quick to complain when it said: "So long as the total supply (of African labour) is deficient, it is to be feared that eager competition between managers to secure labourers will be inevitable. This competition has in some cases taken regrettable forms of overt attempts to bribe and seduce the employees of neighbouring companies to desert their employers. Even without resort to actual attempts to bribe, a manager finding himself short of labour which is urgently required has standing alone scarcely any other remedy than to raise his rates of pay. The result has necessarily been a steady rise of rates all round, which is adding a very heavy additional expense to the working of the mines".

On this assumption that a rise in wages would lead to a decrease in the supply of labour, successful attempts were made to reduce wages of the African labourers and to establish a fixed scale of wages for all the mines. When the Chamber of Mines was formed in 1893 it immediately directed its attention on the supply of African labour. There are three aspects/.....



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aspects of the cost of African labour which interested them. There was the cost of recruiting, recruiting agents engaged them in their home districts, in other employment, and on the roads on their way to the mines, and charged a fee of £4-0-0d for each African supplied. Then there was the cost of housing and feeding him, and then, of course, of his money wages. The Chamber of Mines directed its attention to reducing the cost of recruiting by forming a Central organisation for the recruiting of all labour required by the Mines, called the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, and they also succeeded in persuading the Governments of other territories in Africa to give them a monopoly of recruiting Africans from their areas. They also succeeded in persuading the Transvaal Government to pass a law which would give greater control of the labour force in the districts where large numbers of the Africans were congregated. In 1895 the Volksraad of the Transvaal Republic passed a law, drafted by the leaders of the Mining Industry whereby Africans entering a goldfield which had been proclaimed a labour district had to provide themselves with a District Pass, authorising him to seek employment for three days with the provision for extension for a period on payment of a fee. The Chamber of Mines W.N.L.A. became the sole monopolist in the recruiting of African labour. The Articles of Association of the W.N.L.A. provided among other things, that no company, whilst a member of the W.N.L.A., will be allowed under any circumstances to engage any but white labour, except through the Agency of the Association. This will apply to (1) all Natives who from having previously worked in your mine or who from any cause may come forward and seek work voluntarily,, (2) those who had been recruited within or without the Transvaal, in fact all Natives or coloured men employed either above or below ground on your property.

In addition to controlling the engagement and distribution of African labour the W.N.L.A. decided to reduce the rates of pay of African labourers which had been hitherto over 60/- per month to a maximum of 35/- per month subject to certain exceptions. As a result of the Anglo-Boer War the Mining Industry suffered a setback in the labour supply, and there was considerable dissatisfaction on the part of the Mining Companies in the manner the W.N.L.A. was managing the recruiting of African labour. This, coupled with the shortage of African labour, generally, led to the breaking away of some Mines from the W.N.L.A. and they decided to do their own recruiting of African labour. This competition by the individual mines had a natural effect of raising the wage rates above the maximum average, and even recruiting does not appear to have been less expensive as a result of the break away from the W.N.L.A., for we find the Mine Companies in 1911 forming another Recruiting Agency- the Native Recruiting Corporation (known to Africans as TERA, after its Manager Mr. Taberer). As the shortage of labour continued the Mines directed their attention to the importation of labour from India and other Asiatic countries. Thus in 1904, under the Mine Labour Importation Act the Chinese were introduced to the mines, but they were to receive lower wage rates than the Europeans.

**WHITE LABOUR POLICY:** In our discussion we found that differences between wages of skilled and unskilled workers were not determined by the forces of supply and demand. European wages were so fixed as to attract European artisans from overseas to come to South Africa. African wage rates were therefore so fixed that they should offset this high cost of white labour by fixing them too low. The performance of unskilled work by Africans made Europeans despise unskilled work even though they earned higher wages than Africans. He had become jealous of his favoured position and even European unskilled workers had to do some work which placed them above the African. Giving evidence before the 1908 Mining Industry Commission Mr. Way, a Mine Manager says, "The trouble with the mines is that underground the white labour so-called is not labour at all; it is merely supervision. One of the greatest economies to be made in my mind is that at present we have far too many white employed on the mines. In my opinion two men are employed underground doing the work one man could do easily. The whiteman underground is not a working man at all, he has not to work as in other countries where there is no large supply of unskilled labour."



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**TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961**

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